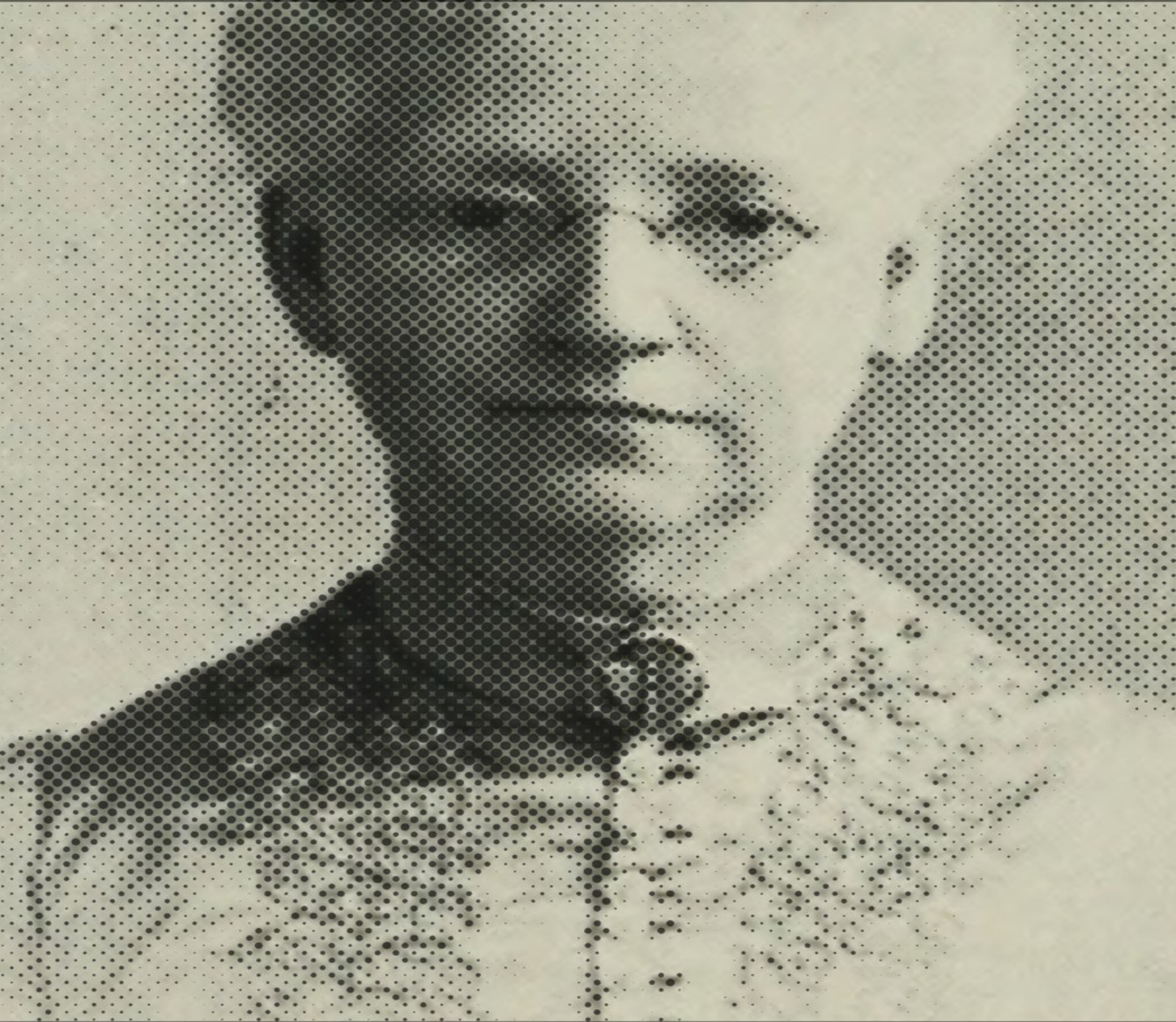


Martha Finley



*Elsie and
the Raymonds*

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

[CHAPTER I.](#)

[CHAPTER II](#)

[CHAPTER III.](#)

[CHAPTER IV.](#)

[CHAPTER V.](#)

[CHAPTER VI.](#)

[CHAPTER VII.](#)

[CHAPTER VIII.](#)

[CHAPTER IX.](#)

[CHAPTER X.](#)

[CHAPTER XI.](#)

[CHAPTER XII.](#)

[CHAPTER XIII.](#)

[CHAPTER XIV.](#)

[CHAPTER XV.](#)

[CHAPTER XVI.](#)

[CHAPTER XVII.](#)

[CHAPTER XVIII.](#)

[CHAPTER XIX.](#)

[CHAPTER XX.](#)

CHAPTER I.

Table of Contents

“Excuse me, Miss, but do you know of any lady who wants a seamstress?” asked a timid, hesitating voice.

Lulu Raymond was the person addressed. She and Max had just alighted from the Woodburn family carriage—having been given permission to do a little shopping together—and she had paused upon the pavement for a moment to look after it as it rolled away down the street with her father, who had some business matters to attend to in the city that afternoon, and had appointed a time and place for picking the children up again to carry them home.

Tastefully attired, rosy, and bright with health and happiness, Lulu’s appearance was in strange contrast to that of the shabbily dressed girl, with pale, pinched features that wore an expression of patient suffering, who stood by her side.

“Were you speaking to me?” Lulu asked, turning quickly at the sound of the voice, and regarding the shrinking figure with pitying eyes.

“Yes, Miss, if you’ll excuse the liberty. I thought you looked kind, and that maybe your mother might want some one to do plain sewing.”

“I hardly think she does, but I’ll ask her when I go home,” replied Lulu. “Are you the person who wants the work?”

“Yes, Miss; and I’d try to give satisfaction. I’ve been brought up to the use of my needle, and the sewing machine too. And—and”—in a choking voice—“I need work badly; mother’s sick, and we’ve only what I can earn to

depend on for food and clothes, and doctor, and medicine, and to pay the rent.”

“Oh, how dreadful!” cried Lulu, hastily taking out her purse.

“You are very kind, Miss; but I’m not asking charity,” the girl said, shrinking back, blushing and shamefaced.

“Of course not, you don’t look like a beggar,” returned Lulu with warmth. “But I’d be glad to help you in some suitable way. Where do you live?”

At this instant Max, whose attention had been drawn for a moment to some article in the show-window of a store near at hand, joined his sister, and with her listened to the girl’s reply.

“Just down that alley yonder, Number five,” she said. “It’s but a poor place we have; a little bare attic room, but—but we try to be content with it, because it’s the best we can do.”

“What is it she wants?” Max asked, in a low aside to Lulu.

“Sewing. I’m going to ask Mamma Vi and Grandma Elsie if they can find some for her. But we’ll have to know where she can be found. Shall we go with her to her home?”

“No; papa would not approve, I think. But I’ll write down the address, and I’m sure papa will see that they’re relieved, if they need help.”

Turning to the girl again, as he took notebook and pencil from his pocket, “What is the name of the alley?” he asked.

“Rose,” she answered, adding, with a melancholy smile, “though there’s nothing rosy about it except the name; it’s narrow and dirty, and the people are poor, many of them beggars, drunken, and quarrelsome.”

"How dreadful to have to live in such a place!" exclaimed Lulu, looking compassionately at the speaker.

"Rose Alley," murmured Max, jotting it down in his book, "just out of State Street. What number?"

"Number five, sir; and it's between Fourth and Fifth."

"Oh, yes; I'll put that down, too, and I'm sure the place can be found without any difficulty. But what is your name? We will need to know whom to inquire for."

"Susan Allen, sir."

The girl was turning away, but Lulu stopped her.

"Wait a moment. You said your mother was sick, and I'd like to send her something good to eat. I dare say she needs delicacies to tempt her appetite. Come with me to that fruit-stand on the corner," hurrying toward it as she spoke, the girl following at a respectful distance.

"That was a good and kind thought, Lu," Max remarked, stepping close to his sister's side as she paused before the fruit-stand, eagerly scanning its tempting display of fruits and confections.

"You don't doubt papa's approval of this?" she returned interrogatively, giving him an arch look and smile.

"No; not a bit of it; he always likes to see us generous and ready to relieve distress. I must have a share in the good work."

"Then they'll have all the more, for I shan't give any less because you're going to give, too. Oh, what delicious looking strawberries!"

"And every bit as good as they look, Miss," said the keeper of the stand.

"What's the price?"

"Dollar a box, Miss. They always come high the first o' the season, you know; they were a dollar-ten only yesterday."

"Do you think your sick mother would enjoy them?" Lulu asked, turning to Susan, who was looking aghast at the price named.

"Oh, yes, indeed, Miss; but—but it's too much for you to give; we have hardly so much as that to spend on a week's victuals."

"Then I'm sure you ought to have a few luxuries for once," said Lulu. "I'll take a box for her," addressing the man, and taking out her purse as she spoke.

"A dozen of those oranges, too, a pound of your nicest crackers, and one of sugar to eat with the berries," said Max, producing his porte-monnaie.

They saw the articles put up, paid for them, put them into Susan's hands, and hurried on their way, followed by her grateful looks.

In trembling, tearful tones she had tried to thank them, but they would not stay to listen.

"How glad she was," said Lulu. "And no wonder, for she looks half starved. And, O Max, just think, if we hadn't a father to take care of and provide for us we might be as poor and distressed as she is!"

"That's so," returned Max; "we've hardly a thing worth having that hasn't come to us through my father."

"*My father, sir,*" asserted Lulu, giving him a laughing glance.

"Yes, our father; but he was mine before he was yours," laughed her brother. "Well, here we are at Blake's, where

you have an errand; at least, so you said, I think.”

They passed into the store, finding so many customers there that all the clerks were engaged; and while waiting till some one could attend to their wants, they amused themselves in scrutinizing the contents of shelves, counters, and show-cases. Some picture-frames, brackets, and other articles of carved wood attracted their attention.

“Some of those are quite pretty, Max,” Lulu remarked in an undertone; “but I think you have made prettier ones.”

“So have you; and see,” pointing to the prices attached, “they pay quite well for them. No, I’m not so sure of that, but they ask good prices from their customers. Perhaps we could make a tolerable support at the business, if we had to take care of ourselves,” he added in a half-jesting tone.

“Earn enough to buy bread and butter maybe, but not half the good things papa buys for us,” said Lulu.

“Is no one waiting upon you?” asked the proprietor of the store, drawing near.

“No, sir; they all seem to be busy,” answered Lulu.

“Yes. What can I show you? Some of this carved work? We have sold a good deal of it, and I’m sorry to say that the young lady who supplied it has decided to give up the business—and go into matrimony,” he added, with a laugh.

A thought seemed to strike Lulu, and she asked, coloring slightly as she spoke, “Does it pay well?”

The merchant named the prices he had given for several of the articles, and asked in his turn if she knew of any one who would like to earn money in that way.

“I—I’m not quite sure,” she answered. “I know a boy, and a girl too, who are fond of doing such work, and I think can

do a little better than this, but—”

“You doubt if they would care to make a business of it, eh?” he said inquiringly, as she paused, leaving her sentence unfinished.

“Yes, sir; I’m not sure they would want to, or that their parents would be willing to have them do so. If you please, I should like to look at materials for fancy work.”

“Yes, Miss. This way, if you please. We have them in great variety, and of the best quality.”

Captain Raymond expected a friend on an incoming train, and had directed the children to be at the depot a few minutes before it was due. Punctuality was one of the minor virtues he insisted upon, and while interested in their shopping, they were not forgetful of the necessity for keeping their appointment with him. Their watches were consulted frequently, and ample time allowed for their walk from the last store visited to the depot.

“We are here first; our carriage isn’t in sight yet,” remarked Lulu with satisfaction, as they reached the outer door of the building.

“Yes,” said Max, “but papa will be along presently, for it wants but ten minutes of the time when the train is due.”

“And he’s never a minute late,” added Lulu.

Max led the way to the ladies’ room, seated his sister comfortably in an arm-chair, and asked if there was anything he could get, or do for her; treating her with as much gallantry as if she had been the sister of somebody else.

“Thank you, Maxie, I’m really comfortable, and in want of nothing,” she replied. “I’ll be glad if that gentleman doesn’t

come," she went on, "for it's so much nicer to have papa all to ourselves driving home."

"Yes; and afterward too. But we mustn't be selfish, and perhaps he would be disappointed if his friend shouldn't come."

"Oh, I hadn't thought of that! And if papa would rather have him come, I hope he will."

"Of course you do. Ah, here comes papa now," as a tall, remarkably fine-looking man, of decidedly military bearing, entered the room and came smilingly toward them.

"Good, punctual children," he said. "I hope you have been enjoying yourselves since we parted?"

"Oh, yes, papa," they answered, speaking both at once; "we did all our errands, and are ready to go home."

"The train is just due," he said, consulting his watch. "Ah, here it comes," as its rush and roar smote upon their ears.

Lulu sprang up hastily.

"Wait a little, daughter," the captain said, laying a gently detaining hand on her shoulder; "we need not be in haste, as we are not going on the train."

"Everybody else seems to be hurrying out, papa," she said.

"Yes; they are probably passengers. Ah, the train has arrived and come to a standstill, so we will go now. Max, you may help your sister into the carriage, while I look about for our expected guest."

The captain scanned narrowly the living stream pouring from the cars, but without finding him of whom he was in quest. He turned away in some disappointment, and was

about to step into his carriage, when a not unfamiliar voice hailed him.

“Good-evening, Captain Raymond. Will you aid a fellow-creature in distress? It seems that by some mistake my carriage has failed to meet me, though I thought they understood that I would return home by this train. If you will give me a lift as far as your own gate I can easily walk the rest of the way to Briarwood.”

“It will afford me pleasure to do so, Mr. Clark, or to take you quite to Briarwood,” responded the captain heartily. “We have abundance of room. Step in, and I will follow.”

This unexpected addition to their party gave Lulu some slight feeling of vexation and disappointment, but her father’s proud look and smile, as he said, “My son Max and daughter Lulu, Mr. Clark,” and the affectionate manner in which, on taking his seat at her side, he put his arm about her waist and drew her close to him, went far to restore her to her wonted good-humor.

Mr. Clark said, “How do you do, my dears?” then engaged the captain in conversation, taking no further notice of the children.

But they were intelligent, well-instructed children, and when the talk presently turned upon one of the political questions of the day they were interested; for their father had taken pains to give them no little information on that and kindred topics. He did not encourage their reading of the daily secular papers—indeed forbade it, because he would not have their pure minds sullied by the sickening details of crime, or love of the horrible cultivated by minute descriptions of its punishment in the execution of

murderers; but he examined the papers himself and culled from them such articles, to be read aloud in the family, as he deemed suitable and instructive or entertaining; or he would relate incidents and give instruction and explanations in his own words, which the children generally preferred to the reading.

The gentlemen were in the midst of their conversation, and the great gates leading into the avenue at Woodburn almost reached, when Mr. Clark caught sight of his own carriage approaching from the opposite direction.

He called and beckoned to his coachman, and with a hasty good-by and hearty thanks to Captain Raymond, transferred himself to his own conveyance, which at once faced about and whirled away toward Briarwood, while the Woodburn family carriage turned into the avenue and drove up to the house.

Violet and the three younger children were on the veranda, waiting for its coming, and ready with a joyful welcome to its occupants.

"Papa, papa!" shouted little Elsie, as they alighted, "Max and Lu, too! Oh, I'se so glad you all tum back adain!"

"Are you, papa's sweet pet?" returned the captain, bending down to take her in his arms with a tender caress.

Then he kissed his wife and the lovely babe crowing in her arms and reaching out his chubby ones to be taken by his father, evidently as much rejoiced as Elsie at his return.

"In a moment, Ned," laughed the captain, stooping to give a hug and kiss to Gracie waiting at his side; then taking possession of an easy-chair, with a pleasant "Thank you, my dears," to Max and Lulu, who had hastened to draw it

forward for him, he took a baby on each knee, while the three older children clustered about him, and Violet, sitting near, watched with laughing eyes the merry scene that followed.

“Gracie and Elsie may search papa’s pockets now and see what they can find,” said the captain.

Promptly and with eager delight they availed themselves of the permission.

Grace drew forth a small, gilt-edged, handsomely bound volume.

“That is for your mamma,” her father said; “you may hand it to her; and perhaps, if you look farther, you may find something for yourself.”

Violet received the gift with a pleased smile and a hearty “Thank you, Gracie. Thank you, my dear. I shall be sure to prize it for the sake of the giver, whatever the contents may be.”

But the words were half drowned in Elsie’s shouts of delight over a pretty toy and a box of bon-bons.

“Hand the candy round, pet; to mamma first,” her father said.

“May Elsie eat some too, papa?” she asked coaxingly, as she got down from his knee to obey his order.

“Yes; a little to-night, and some more to-morrow.”

Grace had dived into another pocket. “Oh! is this for me, papa?” she asked, drawing out a small paper parcel.

“Open it and see,” was his smiling rejoinder.

With eager fingers she untied the string and opened the paper.

“Three lovely silver fruit-knives!” she exclaimed. “Names on ’em, too. Lu, this is yours, for it has your name on it; and this is mine, and the other Maxie’s,” handing them to the owners as she spoke. “Thank you, papa, oh, thank you very much, for mine!” holding up her face for a kiss.

Bestowing it very heartily, “You are all very welcome, my darlings,” he said, for Max and Lulu were saying thank you too.

And now they hastened to display their purchases of the afternoon and present some little gifts to Grace and Elsie.

These were received with thanks and many expressions of pleasure, and Lulu was in the midst of an animated account of her shopping experiences when her father, glancing at his watch, reminded her that she would have barely time to make herself neat for the tea-table if she repaired to her room at once.

“Max and I, too, must pay some attention to our toilets,” he added, giving the babe to its nurse, who had just appeared upon the scene.

“Now, papa, let’s run a race, and see who’ll be down first,”—proposed Lulu laughingly, as she went skipping and dancing along the hall just ahead of him.

“Very well, and I’ll give you a dollar if you are first,—and there are no signs of haste or negligence in your appearance.”

“And is the offer open to me too, papa?” asked Max, coming up behind.

“Yes; I shall not be partial,” answered the captain, suddenly lifting Lulu off her feet and starting up the stairs with her in his arms.

“O papa, you’ll tire yourself all out!” she exclaimed with a merry laugh; “I’m so big and heavy.”

“Not a bit,” he said. “I’m so big and strong. There, now for our race,” as he set her down in the upper hall.

“It’s nice, nice, to have such a big, strong papa!” she said, lifting a flushed, happy face to his and reaching up to give him a hug and kiss.

“I’m glad my little daughter thinks so,” he returned, smiling down on her and laying his hand tenderly on her head for an instant.

The captain and Lulu met in the upper hall just as the tea-bell rang, and at the same instant Max came down the stairs from the third story almost at a bound.

A merry peal of laughter from all three, and the captain said, “So nobody is first; we shall all reach the tea-room together.”

“And you won’t have any dollar to pay, papa,” said Lulu, her face very bright and no disappointment in her tone. She was clinging to her father’s hand as they went down the stairs, Max close behind them.

“But I don’t care to save it,” was the reply, “so what shall be done with it? Suppose I divide it between you and Max.”

“And yourself, papa,” added Max laughingly.

His father smiled. “Perhaps a better plan would be to put it into our missionary box,” he said.

“Oh, yes, sir!” exclaimed both the children, “that would be the best thing that could be done with it.”

They had taken their seats at the table, and all were quiet while the captain asked a blessing on their food.

CHAPTER II

Table of Contents

"I have something to tell you, my dear," Violet began, giving her husband a bright smile from behind the coffee urn as she filled his cup.

"Ah?" he said, returning the smile. "I am all attention. I have no doubt it is something worth hearing."

"Perhaps you remember that mamma's fiftieth birthday will come early next month," Violet resumed.

"No, not the fiftieth surely!" exclaimed the captain. "Really I think that, judging from her looks alone, no one would take her to be over forty."

"So we all think, and everybody says she has a remarkably young face. But it will be her fiftieth birthday, and we, her children, want to do her unusual honor. Of course, as you know, my dear, we always remember the day, and each of us has some little gift for her, but this, being her semi-centennial, we think should be observed in some special manner."

"I agree with you, and what do you propose doing in order to celebrate it appropriately?"

"We have not fully decided that question, and would be glad of suggestions and advice from you, if you will kindly give them."

"I am sensible of the honor you do me, but must take a little time to reflect," was his pleasant rejoinder.

"Papa, how old are you?" asked Grace with sudden animation, as if the question had just occurred to her.

"About twenty-four years older than Max," replied the captain, turning upon his first-born a look of fatherly pride and affection.

"And I'm almost fifteen," added Max.

"That makes papa thirty-nine," remarked Lulu. "You'll be forty next birthday, won't you, papa?"

"Yes, daughter."

"Then Grandma Elsie is only about ten years older than you, not nearly enough older to be your real mother."

"Quite true," he said, with a humorous look, "but I find it not at all unpleasant to have so young and beautiful a mother; a lady so lovely in character, as well as in form and feature, that I should greatly rejoice to know that my daughters would grow up to resemble her in all respects."

"I'd like to be exactly like her, except—" But there Grace paused, leaving her sentence unfinished.

"Except in being fifty years old?" her father asked, regarding her with laughing eyes.

"Yes, sir; I'd rather be a little girl for a good while yet; your little girl, papa, who can sit on your knee whenever she wants to."

"That's right," he said heartily. "I am by no means ready to part with my little Gracie yet."

"I feel just as Gracie does about it," said Lulu. "I want to be a little girl for a while longer, then a young lady; but when I get to be fifty years old I'd like to be as nearly like Grandma Elsie as possible."

"I hope not to be," remarked Max facetiously; "but I know a gentleman I would like to resemble so much when I'm forty, that people would say of me, 'He's just a chip off the

old block,'" and with the last words the lad turned a proud, admiring, affectionate look upon his father.

The captain's countenance expressed pleasure, and Violet, looking pleased also, said, "I hope you will have your wish, Max, and I think there is every prospect of it."

"What plans are thought of for the coming celebration, my dear?" asked the captain.

"We talk of a garden or lawn party, if the weather is fine; all the relatives to be invited, and perhaps a few intimate friends beside. Certainly our minister and his wife."

"I don't think I could suggest anything better," the captain said.

"But you may be able to give some useful hints in regard to plans for the entertainment of the guests, and suitable gifts for mamma."

"Possibly; and you must help me to decide upon mine."

"I shall be only too glad," she answered with a bright, pleased look.

"And we children may give something nice to Grandma Elsie too, mayn't we, papa?" they asked, all three speaking at once.

"Most assuredly," he replied, "the very nicest thing, or things, you can think of that will come within the limits of your financial ability."

"Papa," remarked Grace doubtfully, "I don't believe I know exactly what that means."

"You understand the meaning of ability, surely?" returned her father.

"Yes, sir; but that other word—fi—"

“Financial? as I used it then, it means the amount of money you children may have at your disposal at the time of making your purchases.”

“Oh, I’m glad I have some money saved up!” she remarked with satisfaction.

“How much?” he asked.

“A good deal, papa; about five dollars, I think.”

“Ah, so much as that? quite a fortune,” he said, with a look of amusement.

“I suppose, wife, your mother is to be consulted in regard to the manner of the proposed celebration? about the party, the guests to be invited, and so forth?”

“Oh, yes, sir; about everything but the gifts she is to receive.”

The babies had had their evening romp with papa and been carried off to the nursery, Gracie going along at Elsie’s urgent request, and all the more willingly because she had heard her father say he must write a letter immediately, that it might be in time to go by the next mail, so she knew that for the present she and Max and Lulu must do without their usual bit of chat with him.

Lulu was particularly desirous for an opportunity for a talk with him, for she had a scheme in her head about which she wished to ask his advice and permission. She would not have minded broaching the subject before Max and Gracie, but thought it would be still more enjoyable to talk it over with papa alone.

“I’ll not go far away,” she said to herself, “and when papa has finished his writing maybe I’ll get a chance to talk a little with him before anybody else comes.”

She took a book and seated herself in the veranda; but she did not read. The captain, stepping to the door presently, saw her sitting with the book lying unopened in her lap, her attitude and expression denoting profound thought. She did not seem aware even of his approach as he drew near her side, but started and looked up in surprise as he laid his hand gently on her head, saying, "A penny for my little girl's thoughts! She looks as if she had the affairs of the nation on her shoulders."

"I'm sure they're not worth a penny, papa, but you are welcome to them for nothing," she returned laughingly, "if you have time to let me talk to you."

She rose as she spoke, and taking the chair, he drew her to his knee.

"Plenty of time, now that that letter has been dispatched," he said. "But are you to do all the talking?"

"Oh no, indeed, papa; I hope you'll do the most of it, but I suppose I must begin by telling you my thoughts."

"Yes."

"I was thinking about a poor girl that spoke to me in the street to-day and asked for sewing to do to earn money to support herself and her sick mother.

"I told her I would try to get some work for her. Afterward Max and I went into a store where we saw brackets and picture frames, and other things, carved out of wood as we do it, only they were not so pretty as some we have made; at least we both thought so, and we wondered how much was paid for such work. The price they were asking for them was on them, and Max thought it a good one. We were

talking together about it when the merchant came up and asked if we wanted to buy any of those things.

“He said he had sold a good many, and was sorry the lady who had carved them for him was going to give up doing it. I asked if it paid well, and he told me how much he gave, and asked if I knew anybody who would like to earn money in that way.”

“And what answer did you make to that?”

“I said I wasn’t sure; I knew a boy and girl who were fond of that kind of work, and I thought could do it a little better than those were done, but I didn’t know whether they would want to do it for pay, or whether their parents would be willing to let them.”

“And the boy and girl you referred to were Max and yourself?”

“Yes, sir; would you let us do it if we wanted to?”

“That would depend upon circumstances; it is a question to be considered.”

“Well, papa, this is what I was thinking of when you spoke to me. You know I spend some of my spare time sewing for the poor, and you know I don’t like to sew—I mean I don’t enjoy doing it—and I do enjoy carving; and that poor girl wants sewing to do, because she needs to earn her living, and that’s her way of doing it; and I was trying to decide whether or not it would be right for me to give her the sewing to do and pay her for doing it with money I could earn by carving. Would it be right, papa? and will you let me do it?”

“I say yes to both questions; I think it a good idea; for you will be doing good in two ways—helping the poor to

whom the garments go, and the poor girl who wants employment; and that without indulging yourself in laziness."

"Oh, I am so glad you approve, papa!" Lulu exclaimed in delight. "I was afraid you would not; I was afraid that perhaps I ought to do the sewing myself if only because I dislike it so."

"No, my child, there is nothing praise-worthy in doing a thing merely because it is unpleasant to us. If another is needing help which we can give in that way and no other, duty bids us to perform the unpleasant task; but in this case it seems you can do more good by allowing the young sewing-girl to act as your substitute, helping her at the same time that you help those to whom the garments will go.

"But the sewing you can give will not be really enough to keep even one seamstress busy."

"Oh, no, sir; but I am going to tell Mamma Vi and Grandma Elsie about her, and I think they will find her work and recommend her to other ladies who want sewing done, if they find that she does it well."

"Did you learn her name and where she lives?"

"Yes, sir; and I wanted to go and see the place, but Max said you would not approve; so I didn't go."

"Max was quite right. You must never venture into strange places about the city without my knowledge and consent, unless with Grandma Elsie or some other equally wise and trustworthy person."

"I will not, papa," she answered, smiling lovingly into his eyes. "I do hope I shall never again disobey you in

anything.”

“I hope not, indeed,” he said, smoothing her hair caressingly. “So far as I know, you have been very good and obedient for the last six months or more.”

Just then Violet and Grace joined them, followed almost immediately by Max, and as he stepped from the doorway the Ion family carriage was seen coming up the drive.

It brought Violet’s grandparents, mother, and young brother and sister—Rosie and Walter. They spent the evening. The proposed birthday celebration was under discussion for some time, several questions in regard to it were settled, then Lulu found an opportunity to tell of Susan Allen and her needs.

Grandma Elsie—always ready for every good work—said: “If you will accompany me, Captain, I will hunt them up tomorrow and inquire into their needs, should nothing unforeseen happen to prevent.”

“I shall be at your service, mother, then, or at any other time,” returned the captain gallantly. “And we will take Lulu with us, if you have no objection,” he added, as he caught an entreating look from her.

“Not the slightest,” replied Mrs. Travilla, smiling kindly upon the little girl.

“Oh, thank you, Grandma Elsie! Thank you, papa; I should like to go very much indeed”, exclaimed Lulu joyously.

While Lulu talked with Susan Allen in the city street that afternoon, the girl’s mother lay on a bed of straw in the small attic room they called home; a very forlorn specimen of a home it was, though everything in and about it was

scrupulously neat and clean; the floor was bare, save a strip of carpet beside the bed; there were three unpainted wooden chairs, a little table to match, and a tiny stove; their few changes of raiment hung on hooks along the wall back of the bed, and a few cheap dishes and cooking utensils were ranged in an orderly manner on some shelves in one corner.

The one window was shaded by a paper blind and short white curtain, both bearing evidence of careful mending, as did the night-dress worn by the invalid, the sheets and pillowcases of her bed.

She was not an old woman; Susan was but sixteen, and her mother, who had married very young, little more than twice that age. But toil and privation had broken down her health, and aged her before her time, so that she looked full forty; there were very perceptible lines in her forehead, and the dark hair was streaked with gray; yet it was a pleasant face to look upon—so full of sweet patience and resignation.

A well-worn Bible lay beside her, and one hand rested upon the open page; but her eyes were closed and tears trickled down her wasted cheek, while her lips moved as if in prayer.

One standing very near might have heard the low, murmured words, but they reached only the ear of Him who has said: "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee and thou shalt glorify me."

It was that promise she was pleading.

"Lord," her pale lips whispered, "I believe thy word and obey thy kind command; it is the day of trouble with me and my beloved child. We are in sore straits; the last cent is

gone, the last crust eaten; we have neither barn nor storehouse, yet I know thou wilt feed us as thou dost the sparrows; for thou hast said, 'Are not ye much better than they?' and, 'Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.' Lord, increase my faith and let me never for one moment doubt thy word—thy promise to deliver those who call upon thee in the day of trouble, and never to leave or forsake any who put their trust in thee. Oh, blessed be thy holy name, for all the great and precious promises thou hast given thy people, and upon which thou hast taught me to lean in every time of trouble!"

She was still pouring out her soul in prayer and praise when Susan's light step came up the stairs, the door was hastily thrown open, and she entered with flushed, beaming face, and arms full of bundles, half breathless with excitement and exertion.

"Mother, dear mother!" she cried, as she hastened to deposit her burdens on the table, "I know you have been praying for help, and God has sent it. See here! the very luxury I have been longing to get you, but without the least hope of being able to do so; great, lovely, luscious strawberries!" gently pouring them from the paper bag in which she had carried them, on to a plate. "I'll put some of the finest on a saucer for you. Here is sugar for them, too, and delicate crackers to eat with them. And here are oranges; the finest in the market! O mother, eat and grow strong!" she added, tears springing to her eyes, as she put a saucer of berries into her mother's hand and laid a fine orange by her side. "I won't keep you waiting till I can stem the berries, but just give you some sugar on another saucer

to dip them into. Oh, if I only had some of the rich cream for you that we used to have before we left the farm!”

“Oh, child, our Father has sent us so much, so much, don’t let us fret after anything more!” cried the mother at length, recovering the power of speech, of which surprise and joy had robbed her ever since her daughter’s entrance so richly laden.

“No, mother, no indeed! only I should so love to give you every comfort and luxury to make you well. You are so thin and weak! There, do lie back on your pillows and let me feed you. Isn’t that delicious?” putting a berry into her mouth.

“Oh, very, very! But let me thank God, and then do you eat with me.”

They were very hungry, having scarcely tasted food that day, but when the edge of their appetites had been taken off, Mrs. Allen remarked, with an inquiring look at her daughter, “But you haven’t told me yet where you got all these good things?”

“No, mother, but I’ll do it now. You know I went out in search of work. I can’t beg, but I am willing to ask for employment. I asked at some private houses, and two or three stores, but no one seemed to care to risk trying me.

“Then I saw a carriage (a very handsome one it was, with match horses) stop at a street crossing, and a boy and girl step out on the pavement. A tall, fine-looking gentleman handed the little girl out, then stepped back into the carriage, and it drove off.

“You can’t think how pretty and beautifully dressed the little girl was; she had bright dark eyes, rosy cheeks, and a